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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a project examining the relationship between program model, sociolinguistic factors, and linguistic outcomes in a small sample of school languages other than English (LOTE) programs in Victoria. The languages are Chinese, German, Greek and Italian. Issues under consideration include: content-based versus language-object programs, the groupings in classes of children with and without a home background in the language, the significance of the ethnolinguistic composition of the district and primary-secondary continuity. The need for grammaticalization and realistic expectations is discussed. (Contains 10 references.) (Author/JL)

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MODELS AND SOCIOLINGUISTIC FACTORS IN SOME VICTORIAN SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAMS: A PROGRESS REPORT

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ABSTRACT

This reports on a project examining the relationship between program model, sociolinguistic factors, and linguistic outcomes in a small sample of school LOTE programs in Victoria. The languages are Chinese, German, Greek and Italian. Issues under consideration include: content-based versus language-object programs, the grouping in classes of children with and without a home background in the language, the significance of the ethnolinguistic composition of the district and primary-secondary continuity. The need for grammaticalization and realistic expectations is discussed.

This paper describes a project within the Language and Society Centre of the National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia in which we are attempting to examine the relationship between program model, sociolinguistic factors and linguistic outcomes. Australia is currently experimenting with a wide diversity of program models for the teaching of languages other than English, especially at the primary school. For example 17 languages are at present being offered in Victorian State primary schools. There are vast differences between the programs in time commitment, methodologies, the relation between the language program and the rest of the curriculum, and the way in which the composition of the school population and the local community resources are taken into account. Some of these issues can be il-

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lustrated best by examining programs in a particular language, even though the issue applies to all or most languages.

TYPES OF PROGRAMS

We shall differentiate between language-object programs and content-based programs. The latter category includes immersion programs. Language-object programs have the language as the main or sole object of instruction. Some also have the language as the medium of instruction. Content-based programs have as their object both non-language curriculum subjects taught through the medium of the language and the acquisition and development of the language itself.

Immersion programs are based on a Canadian model although they are found in other parts of the world. Children in these programs receive all or a large proportion (usually at least half) of their instruction through the medium of L2 and thereby acquire the language through use. Curriculum content taught through L1 is gradually increased.

Content-based programs employ immersion principles although most of those offered in Victoria are not immersion programs in the Canadian sense. In Canadian immersion programs children receive all or a large proportion of their instruction in the second language. In the content-based programs in Melbourne, some subjects are taught in L2 (say, for 4 or 5 hours per week). In a variant of this type of program, some segments of a number of subjects are taught in L2 and other segments in L1. In Melbourne there appears to be a predominance of programs in which some segments of some subjects are taught in the second language for a total of 3 hours per week.

Three aspects are highlighted in content-based language programs: communicative need, functional specialisation and comprehensible input. A communicative need for speaking the target language is provided by making the target language the language of particular subjects, for example teaching science in Italian. Functional specialisation is provided through assigning different subjects to different languages, and the teacher using the

target language exclusively to the children both inside and outside the classroom - thus creating a 1 person- 1 language situation. Comprehensible input is provided in class and through community-based activities and supplemented through specific language activities. (See Clyne, 1991:127)

In some schools the LOTE classes are organised according to the language background of the children; those with a home background are in a different class from those without a home background. Other schools do not do so for demographic or philosophical reasons. Some of the programs for mother tongue speakers of languages other than English are bilingual, with often a predominance of L1 in the first few years and a phasing down of the language once English is mastered, but with opportunities to maintain the L1 in language classes. In this project we are focussing on children without a home background in the LOTE and are considering the 'home background' children as an important part of the sociolinguistic environment of the second language learner.

There are a small number of immersion programs in Melbourne. One of these, a late immersion program in Hebrew starting in year 7, is being studied in a joint project of the National Languages Institute of Australia Language and Society Centre at Monash University and the National Languages Institute of Australia Language Testing Centre at Melbourne University. (See Eisikovits and McNamara 1990,1991)

This project deals with selected programs in four languages chosen in consultation with the Victorian Ministry of Education. The languages studied are Chinese, German, Greek and Italian.

In Victoria in 1988, there were 388 language-object programs and 18 content-based programs at primary school level in these four languages. (See Table 1)

AIMS OF THIS PROJECT

Chinese

This section of the project attempts to compare and contrast the

success of Chinese programs operating in areas in which there is a high population of people from Chinese-speaking backgrounds with areas which do not have such a population, and assess the effects of grouping second language learners in separate classes or with children from Chinese-speaking backgrounds.[3]

Greek

We are attempting to assess grouping children with and without a home background in the language and to determine the role of Greek-background children on the Greek competence of second language learners in the same school or class.

Italian

In this section of the project we are comparing the processes and outcomes in language-object and content-based programs.

An attempt is made to compare and contrast the above issues in relation to schools in which there is a high population of children from Italian-speaking backgrounds with those which do not have such a population.

This study includes an analysis of teachers' code-switching in classrooms employing each of the models.

German

The German section of the project builds on a longitudinal style at primary schools which has yielded a substantial data base which can be used for comparison.

The primary-secondary transition process is examined in two schools fed by different types of primary programs. The appropriateness of secondary school models is examined for children proceeding from different types of primary programs.

Among developments in other states there are for example a number of late immersion programs in Queensland. (See Berthold, 1989 and 1990)

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF MODELS AND SOCIOLINGUISTIC ENVIRONMENT OF THE SCHOOLS.

Unless otherwise indicated, the programs under consideration all started in prep. [preparatory year of schooling], and continue throughout primary school.

Chinese

Schools A and B offer content-based programs of 3 hours per week. School A is in a prestigious area with a high proportion of the population being from a Chinese speaking background. One third of the children at school A are from Chinese speaking homes. The Chinese speaking children are in the same class as the non-Chinese speaking children.

There are few speakers of Chinese at School B or in its surrounding area.

School C is on the edge of a migrant area which has a high percentage of Chinese speakers living in the community. School C has a 3 hour per week language-object program. It also conducts a bilingual program for Chinese-speaking children.

The children we are testing in school C started Chinese in prep., those in school A commenced Chinese studies in grade 4 or 5 in 1990, and those in school B from prep. in 1990.

Greek

Schools A and B are in neighbouring areas. In the 1986 census, local government figures for the area indicate that this area has the highest proportion of Greek speaking people in the metropolitan area of Melbourne.

In school A the children from Greek speaking backgrounds and those from non-Greek speaking backgrounds are in separate classes. Children have 3 x 45 minute classes per week.

In school B the Greek speaking children are in the same class as the non-Greek speaking children. There are 2 x 1 hour classes per week.

School C is a non-denominational independent school based on the Greek community but which has also a high proportion of non-Greek speaking children. (64 %) The children have 45 minute classes of Greek daily.

Italian

School A is in an area with few Italian speakers in school and the community. It offers a 3 hour per week content-based program.

School B is in an area which once had a high percentage of Italian speakers. It offers a 3 hour per week language-object program.

School C is in an area which has a very high percentage of Italian speaking people. Approximately 65% of the children attending the school are from homes where a variety of Italian is spoken. The school has a 1 hour per week second language-object program.

German

School A is in an area in which German speakers are the largest non-British ethnic group. However there are not many German speaking children at the school. School B is in a district with a low proportion of German speaking residents.

School A has 2 primary feeder schools, A1 and A2. School A offers a follow-on to the content-based program in school A1 (a program of generally 5 hours per week with clearly defined subject areas.) School A2 (3 hours per week) has less clearly defined subject areas.

School B has a language-object follow-on program. Feeder school B1 offers a content-based program of 4 hours per week. B2 unlike the other programs starts in grade 2 (not in prep.). The program is language-object based in grades 2 and 3, and has a small amount of content-based instruction in grades 4 to 6.

TESTING AND RESULTS

Tests have been conducted so far in listening, speaking reading and

grammar in Chinese, Greek and Italian, and in listening, speaking, reading, writing and grammar in German. Generally most of these tests were administered to all the children in the respective classes. However, only a sample of children were tested in oral proficiency. In selecting the content of these tests, the curriculum followed by the teachers was taken into account. The tests have been administered by field workers with native or near native competence in the respective LOTE.

The data overwhelmingly suggest high attainment in listening comprehension at all levels, but difficulties with grammatical accuracy. Our findings agree with Swain's research, " In traditional teaching of content, however, the language the teacher uses may be functionally restricted in certain ways; correction of content takes precedence over correction of form in order to preserve the communicative flow; correction of form that does occur is inconsistent in its message, and students' opportunities to engage in extended discourse are limited." (Swain, 1991:243)

There is evidence of a slow progression within the development of grammatical phases. (See Clyne, 1986: ch.5, Reich 1986 and Swain, 1991)

Chinese

The children tested are those of junior levels (Grades Prep [preparatory year of schooling], 1 and 2) at school B and C and senior levels (Grades 5 and 6) at schools A and B. Because the three schools started Chinese at different times or in different grades, two sets of tests have been administered.

The test results suggest that children from schools in areas where there is a higher population of native speakers (i.e schools A and C), tend to obtain better scores in the listening comprehension test. Children from schools with a lower population of Chinese speakers (i.e. school B), consistently perform better in oral tests (in both oral reading and oral responding tests). The results indicate that demographical factors may contribute to the

success of listening comprehension skills, but not to oral proficiency, during the first two years of learning. The results also suggest that good teaching strategies and the positive attitude towards the language can be important attributes of success. (See Swain and Lapkin 1982:84-85).

The results from the latest oral tests indicate that it is possible for second language learners who have studied Chinese for two years to acquire the general classifier *ge*, the perfective aspect marker *le*, a complete noun phrase with colour term, and to use complete sentences for answers. Children tend to answer alternative questions (i.e. questions formed by V-*bù*-V or by the coordinator *háishi*) much better than information questions (i.e. questions formed by question words, such as *what*, *how* in English).

The majority of the children who had the oral reading and oral responding tests are able to initiate and react appropriately to greeting, thanking, leave-taking, introducing self or others, expressing good wishes, and information about personal details. They also know how to express apology, lack of comprehension, and react to questions about personal likes and dislikes and simple information questions. Like most second language learners, their comprehension precedes and exceeds production.

Although the time of exposure to the Chinese language is the same across the three schools, children at school B might have more Chinese input and more opportunities to speak Chinese in the classroom than the others, as the class always commences with a casual conversation in Chinese between the teacher and the children. Furthermore, in the class, children often break into smaller groups for discussion and the better learners served as the group leaders or the linguistic models. In addition, the same group had a character quota test every week.

The results of class observations suggest that a separate language program is required for native speakers: while children with and without Chinese backgrounds continue to be catered for in the same class, children with a home background in the language

are likely to be distracting sources as the level of the language is far from motivating and does not appear to challenge them.

Greek

In schools A and B, grades 2, 4 and 5 have been tested. In school C, grades 2, 3 and 4 have been tested. A sample of children from each of the respective classes was given oral proficiency and listening comprehension tests. In addition to the oral and listening tests, children from the higher grades were also given tests in grammar and writing.

From our research so far, it appears that the children's results are influenced by the choice of language code used by the teacher as the medium of instruction, and this is linked with the teacher's background and set of expectations.

The teacher in school A speaks Greek for approximately 40% of the lesson whereas the teachers in schools B and C speak English in the classroom for approximately 80% and 90% respectively. The children in school A have performed better in all of the tests so far.

The results of the tests show that the children from school A have shown better oral, listening and writing skills. These children were able to produce a number of sentences in Greek, while in school B the children only wrote single Greek words in otherwise English sentences. In school C, where more emphasis is placed on comprehension than on production, oral proficiency is not quite as high, and their writing was not sufficiently developed to be tested.

Italian

Children from grades 3, 4 and 5 at schools A , B and C have been tested in the areas of listening, speaking, reading comprehension and grammar.

As might be predicted, the children whose teachers require them to speak the target language generally have a higher level of oral proficiency (Schools B and C).

There was little difference between the three schools in the listening comprehension, with all children achieving very high results.

In programs where grammar is emphasised as in some language-object based programmmes, in school C and to some extent school B the children in grades 4 and 5 have a better grasp of the grammatical structures.

However, of the children in grade 3, the children from the content-based program (school A) performed better.

The results seem to indicate that the consistent use of the target language (comprehensible input) by the teacher enhances the children's acquisition of the LOTE. This factor combined with encouragement from the teacher for the children to speak the LOTE further enhances this.

Exposing children to a wider range of concepts and subjects in the LOTE, as in content-based programs, seems to require more hours per week than is currently provided.

The community and the use of home background speakers as a model of the target language appears to enhance further the comprehensible input for the second language learners.

In schools where there is a high concentration of LOTE background speakers, second language learners are provided with the opportunity to see that the target language is used outside the classroom. Peers speaking the target language with parents and/or grandparents picking them up from school add to this situation.

Transition, continuity and attrition: German as Case Study

In general, students from 5-hour per week bilingual programs continued German for longer than those from 3-hour models. They scored better in tests, and were more confident in using the language. Students from the primary school offering 2 years of structured second language teaching followed by a content-based program also scored very highly. Comparisons between these two models cannot be made on the present data, as primary school influences are clouded by those of the secondary schools (usually different in these two cases).

A positive attitude to German seemed to encourage high scores and fluency. Use of the language was also a positive factor, although the students' rationales for their use were of some concern. Those who had German penfriends seemed to feel that this was something which they did because they were learning German, rather than something which learning German enabled them to do. Many students saw no real reason to learn German other than as a VCE subject. Some felt that it might be of use in "getting a job" or give them something "to study at University" and a few wanted to travel and thought German might be useful. Of those students who used the language, only a few actually spoke with Germans. Some students spoke it with one another, particularly to exclude others from their conversation, whether these were their parents or friends.

Where German was exclusively, or almost exclusively, used in the classroom, students' answers contained more German and less English, and seemed more likely to be complete sentences.

Circumstances caused one of the secondary schools to group together a number of different disparate categories of students after year 8. This affected the outcomes adversely.

Students and teachers felt it was better to separate the bilingual students from the beginners in secondary school. Teachers felt that having to cater to both groups at once added stress to the classroom and to their lesson planning, and that such classes were of limited value to each group. Students resented attempts at such mixing, feeling that the mixed classes were either too hard or too easy, depending on the group to which they belonged. Such mixing was felt to lead to resentment, and a lack of enthusiasm to continue with the language.

Both groups were seen to have different needs, not just with the level of language instruction but also with the types of instruction needed. Students from primary German programs generally had a much larger vocabulary and therefore a higher level of comprehension than those who began German at secondary school. On the other hand, students beginning German in high school were less likely to use English loans or to code-switch, and had a better grasp of the limitations of their language ability.

Actual classroom behaviour did not vary significantly between the bilingual and the beginners' classes, although the levels of German spoken for continuing students were in general higher.

Our study of students who had taken German at primary and secondary school and who have not learnt German for two years, indicates that those who were using the language in a non-school environment had retained it best. Even minimal usage had positive effects on the students' confidence in German and also in their general fluency. Where students used the language regularly (for example: "I speak German with my girlfriend and her family who are German"; "I babysit for a German family who don't speak much English"), their language ability was not lost at the same rate.

One student's scores on identical tests actually improved over time! This is an example of residual learning whereby a pause in the learning process may reduce certain problem areas. (See Cohen, 1975)

Our data confirm the earlier indications (Clyne, 1986) that students beginning the language in grade 3 may be more successful than those beginning in grade 1. These data are concerned with only a small proportion of the students, and only 2 separate cohorts of students, so is questionable. The limited evidence available does show that either a content-based or a language-object program can be suitable to follow on a range of primary school models.

The German teachers at the high schools we visited commented that they are frequently surprised by their students' levels of ability. They saw a distinct difference between teaching the beginning students and those continuing from a primary program. They felt that an understanding of the principles of bilingual education was essential to the success of their programs, and that where a teacher had doubts about the effectiveness of the program, the usefulness of their teaching would suffer as a result. As a result of these concerns, they expressed a strong need for further teacher training on bilingualism and bilingual education.

Although there are many primary school second language programs, there are comparatively few follow-on transition programs. The lack of transition programs ultimately affects the

level of attainment that one achieves in the second language. For example, after studying the LOTE for seven years at primary school, many of the children proceed to a secondary school in which the LOTE is taught from the beginning. It would seem that more liaison is required between the primary and secondary school sectors in order to rectify this situation.

CODE-SWITCHING

We are using the term code-switching to mean the alternating use of two languages; for example, a conversation begins in language A then switches to language B in the course of the interaction.

In our study the teachers in the school communities in which there are a high proportion of the target language speakers seem to have more instances of code-switching occurring.

Code-switching may be used for discourse purposes and has a range of functions, including recapitulation, explanation, emphasis and exemplification. Teachers may use code-switching for any of these purposes.

Examples -

Recapitulation	Allora, hai vinto tu ? You won ? (Well then, you won ? You won?)
Explanation	Alt it is only an egg. (Stop, it is only an egg.)
Emphasis	Aspetta right grade 5 it's obvious that you're not listening.) (Wait right grade 5 it's obvious that you're not listening.)

In our study we have found instances of code-switching and of code-mixing occurring in all of the languages. Some teachers switch codes to reinforce an idea and some teachers code-switch to discipline children.

Some teachers code-switch because they may have low expectations of the students' ability to comprehend the LOTE.

Although the amount of code-switching and code-mixing

varies in degree in each of the schools, it has not been found to lead to a breakdown in communication.

ATTITUDES: CHILDREN AND TEACHERS

All of the LOTE teachers were interviewed separately by the field worker.

All the teachers expect their pupils to read and write simple sentences, and to be able to hold a simple conversation in the LOTE. The teachers also indicated that they would like the children to have an understanding of the culture.

The teachers' expectations were generally reflected in the choice of code in the classroom discourse. It was found that teachers who expect the students to attain at least a high level of comprehension speak the target language more than English in the classroom.

The majority of students enjoyed learning a LOTE, and many of them indicated that they would like to learn more languages.

ISSUES PERTAINING TO THE MODELS AND ENVIRONMENTS IN THIS STUDY

It has been observed that teacher expectations have a major influence on the choice of language used in the second language classroom. Pessimistic expectations often result in the use of English as the language of instruction. This produces a lower amount of exposure to the target language, and therefore the input is reduced.

There is a vicious circle which operates in some programs in which the teacher has low expectations. The teachers think that the children cannot understand the second language so they speak English, consequently the children have less exposure to the second language and the students' ability to comprehend and produce the second language is hindered. It is ironic that many of these teachers have a set of rules/instructions which are only said in the target language. Where the target language is used as the

language of discourse more time can be spent concentrating on the second language by the teacher.

Language teachers who have optimistic expectations about their students' abilities often exclude the use of English from the classroom. Students are both encouraged and expected to interact in the target language.

In some programs the teachers may switch between English and the target language yet expect the students to speak only the target language.

Children who are left to cut and paste with little intervention from the teacher, and who are neither expected nor encouraged to speak the L2 may soon realise that they do not need to speak the L2, and where a translation is provided, they do not need to comprehend the L2 either. This in turn frustrates the children and they switch off.

Children do not need to try to understand the second language in those programs where the use of translation occurs since an English equivalent will be provided for the children. Where rote learning is employed, unanalysed forms of language appear. Production lags behind comprehension, and grammatical development tends to progress slowly.

Few students are given a challenge in these types of situations. The children do not need to concentrate in the second language when an English translation is readily given. To many of the children, it may seem that there is little purpose in their learning a second language. This in turn affects their attitude to learning the LOTE. Many children switch off after about three years of learning the second language.

In programs where the LOTE is the medium of instruction, the children are challenged to think in the second language. The answers are not provided for them in English. The children need to keep up with the teacher in order to understand the lesson, and in this way are encouraged to participate in, and learn the LOTE.

Not only quantity but also quality of input is vital in the acquisition of the LOTE. That is to say, the consistent use of the LOTE by the teacher and where possible the students, results in most of the children achieving a reasonable degree of proficiency

in the second language. For example, it has been observed that it is not simply a matter of teaching the LOTE for more hours and insisting that the teachers speak the second language. In content-based instruction, it is important that the comprehensible input is constantly provided to form a basis for the children's own production in the language.

THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY

So far our data seem to suggest that the community does play a role in the children's acquisition of the L2.

The teacher may call upon the home background speakers to model the L2 and therefore are providing the second language learner with another model. Their presence in the classroom may have a positive effect on the motivation levels of the L2 learners. The L2 learners have the opportunity of hearing the L2 being spoken by other people in the community. This brings the L2 out of the textbooks and classroom and into their world. This applies only if the children with a home background in the language are regarded as a resource. In Chinese the listening comprehension skills have been best in schools where there are numbers of Chinese speakers.

Programs in which the children have relatively high levels of speaking and understanding share several features:

Progress conclusions

- realistic teacher expectations - challenging and motivating the students, not underestimating their capabilities (cutting and pasting with minimal exposure to the second language is more or less time wasted)
- consistent use of target language
- positive attitude of and support from teaching staff
- support from generalist staff in the school
- support from parents and community

Functional specialisation, communicative need and comprehensible input are the three prerequisites for good LOTE programs, regardless of whether they are content-based or language-object programs.

With purely non-verbal activities such as cutting and pasting, there is no comprehensible input unless a teacher intervenes. Where a teacher uses English 80% of the time, there is no communicative need for the LOTE. And if the same teacher speaks the target language and English some of the time, there is no functional specialisation.

Implications

Care must be taken to ensure that sufficient comprehensible input is available in content-based programs with a limited allotment of time. In later year primary school programs, more attention may need to be given to grammatical sensitisation.

Language teachers, their colleagues and school administrators must fully understand the program model followed by the school and its practical consequences. As teacher expectations of the program are crucial, such issues need to be discussed more centrally in teacher training and in-service courses.

NOTES

1 Our thanks are due to the schools, teachers and educational bodies who are helping with this research. We thank also Bee Chin Ng for her advice in the Chinese section of the project.

2 However, a parallel study of the Chinese development of the Chinese-speaking students in school A is underway.

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